

## Message Text

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 01 BUENOS 05626 272025Z

15

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAM-01

OMB-01 BIB-01 TRSE-00 /060 W  
----- 021206

R 271855Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6875

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE BUENOS AIRES 5626

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, PINT, AR

SUBJECT: PRESS ASSOCIATION DEPLORES GOVT RESTRICTIONS ON MEDIA

1. THE ARGENTINE NEWSPAPER OWNERS ASSOCIATION (ADEPA) IN A LENGTHY NOTE TO PRESIDENT VIDELA LAST WEEK (AUG 21) SAID THAT ECONOMIC PRESSURES, ANTI-TERRORISM EFFORTS AND RESTRICTIONS ON FREEDOM OF THE PRESS WERE SEVERELY COMPROMISING THE PRESS IN ARGENTINA. IN ITS MESSAGE ADEPA EMPHASIZED THAT THE PRESS SHARES THE GOVT'S AND PUBLIC'S CONCERN OVER THE SUBVERSIVE THREAT, AND THAT IT, TOO, HAS BEEN THE TARGET OF PRESSURES, EXTORTION, TERRORISM AND ASSASSINATION. BUT, IT SUGGESTED, THE GOVT-IMPOSED SELF-CENSORSHIP DID NOT CONTRIBUTE TO THE STRUGGLE AGAINST SUBVERSION; RATHER IT CONTRIBUTED TO THE CLIMATE OF FEAR AND INSECURITY, DISTORTING REALITY, AND COST-ING NEWSPAPERS CREDIBILITY AND READERSHIP.

2. NOTING THAT "MANY OFFICIALS DO NOT SEEM TO UNDERSTAND THE ROLE OF THE PRESS IN THE PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES," THE MESSAGE SAID THAT A FREE PRESS COULD HELP THE GOVT ATTAIN ITS OBJECTIVES. "NOT ONLY IS IT THE PRESS'S FUNCTION TO INFORM, IT IS ALSO THE ONLY CHANNEL BY WHICH THE AUTHORITIES CAN MEASURE PUBLIC REACTION TO ITS PROGRAMS. THERE CAN BE NO DEMOCRACY WHERE THE PUBLIC CANNOT COUNT ON RECEIVING DIVERSIFIED INFORMATION, COVERED AND ANALYZED FROM DIFFERENT POINTS

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 02 BUENOS 05626 272025Z

OF VIEW." THE LETTER CALLED ON PRESIDENT VIDELA TO MAKE GOOD

HIS REMARKS THAT A FREE PRESS WAS ESSENTIAL FOR ARGENTINA'S RECUPERATION AND ASKED THAT HE RESTORE PRESS FREEDOMS.

3. THE MESSAGE DID NOT ELABORATE ON WHAT IS CONSIDERED TO BE THE GREATER COMPLAINT OF THE PRESS, NAMELY ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES STEMMING FROM REDUCED SALES AND SOME GOVT POLICIES. HIGHER OFFICIAL PRICES FOR NEWSPRINT AND OTHER MATERIALS HAVE INCREASED NEWSPAPER COSTS AND CUT READERSHIP DRASTICALLY. THE FAILURE OF THE GOVT TO MAKE GOOD THE PAST DEBTS OF THE OFFICIAL NEWS AGENCY TELAM IS REPORTEDLY DRIVING SOME SMALLER

PAPERS TO BANKRUPTCY. TELAM, EXCLUSIVE DISTRIBUTOR OF STATE PUBLICITY AND ADVERTISING WHICH IS THE MAINSTAY OF MANY PROVINCIAL PAPERS, RAN UP MORE THAN A MILLION DOLLARS OF DEBTS DURING THE PERONIST GOVT. SO FAR, THE MILITARY GOVT IS BALKING AT PAYING. IT IS ALSO INVESTIGATING FORMER TELAM OFFICIALS SUSPECTED OF POCKETING MILLIONS OF DOLLARS IN AGENCY FUNDS. FORMER TELAM DIRECTOR IN RIO, CLAUDIO FERREYRA, WAS ARRESTED LAST WEEK (AUG 20) IN BRAZIL AND GOA WILL PROBABLY REQUEST HIS EXTRADITION BACK TO ARGENTINA.

4. RECENT DISTURBANCES AT NEWSPAPER OFFICES ALSO APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN MOTIVATED MORE BY ECONOMIC STRAINS THAN BY POLITICAL DISGRUNTLEMENT. A STRIKE AT THE AFTERNOON CRONICA (AUG 19-20) BY GRAPHICS WORKERS APPARENTLY RESULTED FROM RECENT CUTBACKS IN REDUNDANT STAFF. SECURITY FORCES ON AUG 23 RAIDED THE CRONICA PRINTING PLANT AND ARRESTED PRINTER'S DELEGATE ALFREDO VILLANUEVA, ALTHOUGH IT WAS NOT MADE CLEAR WHETHER HIS ARREST WAS CONNECTED WITH THE EARLIER STRIKE.

5. INCIDENTS BETWEEN THE PRESS AND MILITARY GOVT HAVE ACTUALLY BEEN REMARKABLY FEW. RELATIVELY FEW JOURNALISTS HAVE BEEN ARRESTED AND MOST OF THESE WERE SUBSEQUENTLY RELEASED. MOST NOTABLE ARE THE CASES OF TWO DIRECTORS OF ULTIMA HORA (NOW RENAMED CRONICA) WHO WERE ARRESTED FOR LESS THAN TWO WEEKS IN LATE JULY FOR PRECIPITOUSLY PUBLISHING THE DEATH OF MARIO SANTUCHO BEFORE THE INFORMATION HAD BEEN OFFICIALLY RELEASED BY THE ARMY. PRESS GUIDELINES ISSUED BY THE GOVT IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE MARCH 24 COUP FORBADE ANY MENTION OF TERRORIST AND ANTI-TERRORIST OPERATIONS UNLESS OFICIALLY RELEASED BY THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 03 BUENOS 05626 272025Z

MILITARY.

6. IN BUENOS AIRES, ONLY ONE JOURNALIST IS KNOWN TO BE MISSING. HUGO DEMARCHI, A RELATIVELY UNKNOWN REPORTER RECENTLY FIRED FROM CRONISTA COMERCIAL WAS KIDNAPPED AUG 10. CASES OF MISSING AND ARRESTED JOURNALISTS ARE MORE FREQUENT IN THE PROVINCES WHERE, IT IS SAID, SOME NEWSPAPER OWNERS DENOUNCE THEIR RIVALS TO THE LOCAL MILITARY IN ORDER TO HURT THE COMPETITION.

7. COMMENT. ADEPA, A CONSERVATIVE, PRESTIGIOUS ASSOCIATION OF WELL OVER A HUNDRED ARGENTINE EDITORS AND PUBLISHERS HAS, WITH ITS OPEN LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT, PUT ITSELF ON RECORD AGAINST GOVT RESTRICTIONS ON PRESS FREEDOMS. THE CREDIBILITY ISSUE IT RAISES WAS PERHAPS OVERPLAYED; THE ARGENTINE PRESS WAS NOT NOTED FOR ITS OBJECTIVITY IN THE PAST, AND IT IS GENERALLY CONCEDED THAT THE PRESS IS CONSIDERABLY MORE WORRIED ABOUT ITS PRECARIOUS FINANCIAL SITUATION THAN OVER THE ISSUE OF FREEDOM OF THE PRESS. NEVERTHELESS, ADEPA IS CLEARLY CONCERNED WITH THE PRESS'S ABBREVIATED ROLE AND THE PROFESSIONAL EMBARRASSMENT OF KOW-TOWING TO THE MILITARY. "THE PRESS IS FACED WITH AN IMPOSSIBLE SITUATION," REMARKED ONE PRESS OBSERVER. "IT CANNOT PRINT HAPPENINGS THAT ANYONE CAN PICK UP OVER THE POLICE RADIO." CHAPLIN

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

NNN

## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** REPORTS, CENSORSHIP, POLICIES, THE PRESS, POLITICAL SITUATION  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 27 AUG 1976  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** GolinoFR  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1976BUENOS05626  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D760328-0767  
**From:** BUENOS AIRES  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1976/newtext/t19760814/aaaaaljg.tel  
**Line Count:** 131  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION ARA  
**Original Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 3  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** GolinoFR  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 09 JUL 2004  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <09 JUL 2004 by ElyME>; APPROVED <12 JUL 2004 by GolinoFR>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
04 MAY 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** PRESS ASSOCIATION DEPLORES GOVT RESTRICTIONS ON MEDIA  
**TAGS:** PINS, PINT, AR  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006